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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 FRANKFURT 005846

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [GM](#)

SUBJECT: RHEINLAND-PFALZ PROPOSES JOINT TRAINING FACILITY
AT BAUMHOLDER TO KEEP U.S. PRESENCE

REF: A) FRANKFURT 1495 B) BERLIN 1867 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Consul General Peter Bodde, reasons 1.5(b) and (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: The Rheinland-Pfalz (R-P) state government has proposed converting Baumholder (a 29,158 acre army training facility supporting around 13,000 U.S. soldiers and family members) into a multi-purpose facility for humanitarian intervention and civil defense training. This "Joint Training Area" would be available to Germany, the U.S., NATO, the EU, and others. Rheinland-Pfalz is awaiting a German federal endorsement of the plan. This proposal supplements Germany's existing efforts at Grafenwoehr to train third-country forces from outside the region (theater). R-P's initiative is the latest expression of its commitment to finding workable compromises for major military installations in Rheinland-Pfalz in light of possible cuts from USG Global Force Posture Review. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) At the request of the R-P government, the Consul General, accompanied by the Foreign Liaison Officer (FLO) for Rheinland-Pfalz and Saarland as well as a representative from the European Command (EUCOM), met with Rheinland-Pfalz State Secretary Karl-Peter Bruch on June 14 to discuss force

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posture review. Bruch had asked for the meeting as a follow-up to May 28 consultations in Berlin (ref B). Bruch began by discussing the stationing concept presented by U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) Commanding General B.B. Bell at the May 28 consultations. Bruch acknowledged that he realized Bell's presentation was still pre-decisional, but observed that the plan made no mention of the Baumholder training facility, currently supporting around 13,000 U.S. soldiers and family members.

3. (C) Bruch unveiled a R-P government proposal to convert Baumholder into a multi-purpose Joint Training Area (JTA) for use in joint and combined crisis response, humanitarian intervention, and civil defense training. He noted that the facility would be available for use by U.S., German, EU, NATO, and third-country troops. Bruch said that they were awaiting final approval from the military and the German government, but hoped to have the concept finalized by September and included in the German military's base planning for the next fiscal year.

4. (C) Bruch said that Department of Defense Deputy Assistant Secretary for NATO and European Affairs Ian Brzezinski explained in March that any facility proposed by Rheinland-Pfalz would have to be available for both German and American use to be successful. Bruch noted that the proposed training and exercise area would be designed for use by a variety of civil and military organizations, but hopes that the new facility could encourage a decision to retain a significant U.S. military presence to remain in Baumholder.

5. (SBU) CG, USFLO, and EUCOM representatives were generally in a listening mode. Nevertheless, while acknowledging the potential uses of the proposed training and exercise facility for German and European troops, EUCOM and USFLO representatives remarked that the U.S. military already uses Grafenwoehr (a U.S. army base in Bavaria) to perform similar training exercises for Non-Commissioned Officers from Poland and other Eastern European NATO partner states, and asked what the proposed facility could provide above and beyond Grafenwoehr's capabilities. Bruch asserted that Baumholder could provide low-tech training to a variety of security forces and crisis responders and has the advantage of proximity to the existing U.S. infrastructure in the Ramstein/Kaiserslautern area. State Secretary Bruch has already written to Department of Defense Deputy Assistant Secretary for Installations and Environment Ray DuBois to

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request a meeting on the Baumholder proposal and he has also signaled his intent to continue to raise the issue aggressively with the German government and German military.

COMMENT

6. (C) The proposed JTA at Baumholder is the latest in a series of efforts by the state to minimize the impact of troop withdrawals associated with U.S. force posture review.

R-P has the largest number of resident U.S. troops of any German state (approximately 24,700), and its smaller economy (dependent on American forces) would be hardest hit by a reduced U.S. military presence. Since the R-P government understands that they will retain major facilities such as Ramstein and Landstuehl, their attention is now focused on medium-sized installations like Baumholder. Although R-P has a popular and active Minister-President in Kurt Beck (SPD), a financially stretched German military is moving forward with plans to close more than 100 existing Bundeswehr facilities across Germany. Continued belt-tightening in Berlin means that securing funding for R-P's Baumholder proposal will be difficult. END COMMENT.

BODDE